

HIKING TRAILS

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LAKE LOUISE, PARADISE VALLEY, MORaine LAKE, and LAKE O'HARA AREAS

OF

BANFF AND YOHO NATIONAL PARKS



ISSUED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE HONOURABLE ALVIN KAMITON, M.P., MINISTER OF NORTHERN AFFAIRS AND NATIONAL RESOURCES

TRAILS have a fascinating appeal for the student of nature and for all of those who love the great outdoors. In the Mountain National Parks are trails that follow the course of turbulent streams and skirt the shores of tiny mountain tarns; trails that wind through high passes beyond the timberline up to the edge of the eternal snows; trails once used by Indian hunters long before the coming of the white man; wildlife trails to meadows carpeted with wild flowers; and trails that lead casually into regions of quiet solitude and unforgettable scenic beauty.

Many of the trails described in the following paragraphs are maintained by the National Parks Service for wardens patrolling the areas in the interests of forest and wildlife protection, but these trails also provide recreation and enjoyment for park visitors.

Visitors undertaking the longer hikes or rides in Banff National Park should obtain contour maps of the park, available at the Information Bureaus at nominal cost.

LAKE LOUISE AREA

For visitors with only an hour or two to spare at Lake Louise, a walk along the lake shore for a mile or two, or along the three-quarter-mile Fairview Lookout trail starting near the boathouse, will be found most rewarding.

For hikers, a comfortable schedule of two days will cover the trails described below.

The "Lakes In The Clouds" are reached from Lake Louise by a trail which leaves the shore just beyond the last building on the north side of the lake. The trail leads up an easy grade for 2 miles to Mirror Lake (6,665 ft.) a charming round, green pool at the foot of the Big Beehive.

Climbing to the right, the trail switchbacks a little. Farther to the right it follows the eastern spur of Mount St. Piran for 1 mile to the Little Beehive where the National Parks Service maintains a Fire Lookout. Here is one of the most panoramic views in the whole area; 50 miles of Bow Valley from Bow Peak in the northwest to Pilot Mountain, prominent in a sea of peaks, in the east. The highest peak in view, Mount Hector (11,135 ft.), is resplendent above its timbered slopes. To the north Mount Richardson is the dominant peak, and eastward directly down the Bow Valley the long ridges of Protection Mountain and Mount Eisenhower can be seen.

If hikers who come directly to Lake Agnes from Mirror Lake, they may return by a higher trail to the Little Beehive, starting behind the tea-house (1 mile), or may continue around the lake and up the Big Beehive. If they are not going farther, they should at least take a few minutes along the lake shore, where the hillside grows one of the most profuse and varied alpine wild flower gardens to be found anywhere in this part of the country. It is at its best in July. The summit of the Big Beehive (4 miles from Lake Louise) reveals one of the best views not so sweeping as from the Little Beehive, but giving a fine sight of the Lake Louise Valley.

Continuing over the hump of the Big Beehive, hikers may return to Lake Louise (3 miles) by bearing left when they come to the High-line trail which takes them back via Mirror Lake. If they bear right they may continue on the High-line to the Lookout above the upper end of Lake Louise; beyond the Lookout the trail forks, and once more left to join the lower trail, or straight on to join it higher up on the way to the Plain of Six Glaciers. Mileages for this group of trails are: Lake Louise, via Big Beehive to Plain of Six Glaciers, 6½ miles; Lake Louise, via Mirror and High-line to Plain of Six Glaciers, 6 miles; Lake Louise, by lake trail to Plain of Six Glaciers, 4 miles. The Plain of Six Glaciers is one of those lovely alpine meadows scattered with small blossoms and surrounded by larch, balsam, and large spruce. In the plain stands a beautiful little stone and log chalet tea-house. It is away from the lake completely, surrounded by glaciated peaks and overlooking the main Victoria Glacier and its huge moraines. Directly across the valley the Lefroy Glacier sweeps down from the Mitre to join the Victoria. A view from a higher level may be obtained by climbing another mile up the north ridge of Mount Victoria. Other peaks visible from these points are marked on the map.

PARADISE VALLEY

Extensive trails lead from Lake Louise or from Paradise Creek on the Moraine Lake road, into Paradise Valley, a large glacial cirque southeast of, and parallel to, the Lake Louise Valley.

Mileages for this group of trails are: Lake Louise to Saddleback, 3½ miles; from Saddleback to main trail, 2½ miles; by main trail to Lake Louise, 4 miles; Lake Louise by main trail around Saddleback and up valley to Giant Steps, 8 miles; or to Lake Annette, 6 miles; Lake Louise by main trail up Paradise Valley and over Sentinel Pass to Moraine Lake, 14 miles. Starting from road up Paradise Creek, subtract 1½ miles from above mileages.

Although the valley may be reached by a fairly level trail around Saddle Mountain, a route one way over the Saddle (2,000 ft.) is well worthwhile for the view and for the beauties of Sheol Valley. Any view looking across a valley is more impressive than looking up. This is particularly true of Mount Temple as seen from Saddleback across Paradise Valley, and of Haddo and Sheol across Sheol Valley. Also from here it is a climbing walk of less than 1,400 feet to the top of Mount Fairview overlooking Lake Louise. Both sides of Saddleback are fine places to see alpine flowers.

The Lake Annette trail leaves the Paradise Creek trail a mile farther up the valley from the Sheol junction. After the creek is crossed there is a well-graded climb of less than 200 feet to the shelf of Mount Temple which cradles the lake.

If hikers plan on making a complete tour of the valley, the High-line trail leads from Annette up through the forest to a larch plateau, which carries through to the Sentinel Pass Trail. Here the trail turns right to join the main valley trail.

Many small trails across the valley lead to the Giant Steps. Here great slabs of rock in symmetrical arrangement form a natural staircase over which the stream, coming from the north side of the valley, falls smoothly at first, then with a roar and thunder as the steps become steeper. Do not follow the stream out to the main trail, as this may be marshy. The proper trail leads back up the ridge enclosing the stream, from the bottom of the main waterfall, and then through the larch to the main trail a little way below the upper junction. Coming up the main trail one will find a sign marking this Giant Steps branch.

The casual hiking clothing recommended is adequate for all Paradise Valley trails, but boots with either heavy rubber soles or hob nails should be worn over Sentinel Pass, since on the upper portion of the Paradise Valley side of the pass, the trail has been obliterated by huge rocks, which can bruise the feet or sprain an ankle if not negotiated carefully. The way is plain, however, since the trail carries right up into a defile and from the south side it leads straight up the Saddleback to Larch Valley and Moraine Lake. This is a climb of 2,000 feet from Paradise or 2,366 from Moraine Lake. Sentinel Pass is really a notch in the great rock wall that forms the Paradise cirque. It is made particularly fascinating by the narrow pinnacles on the northwest side of the pass, from which it derives its distinctive name. Horses are not to be taken over this pass.

MORaine LAKE AREA

This lake lies in the valley beyond Paradise (see map on reverse side) and there is a highway as well as a trail to it from the Lake Louise area.

Mileages for this group of trails are: Lake Louise to Moraine Lake, 10 miles; Moraine Lake to Consolation Lake, 2½ miles; Moraine Lake to Larch Valley, 2½ miles; Moraine Lake via Larch Valley to Eiffel Lake, 5 miles.

The trail from Lake Louise to Moraine Lake starts behind the boathouse. If hikers have plenty of time they will enjoy this 9-mile walk, although few may wish to do it both ways. If time is limited, it is better to drive or take a bus to Moraine and then follow the shorter trails in that area. The Consolation Lake trail starts in the camp-ground at Moraine Lake. There is a boggy section of the lower end of Consolation Lake, so that if hikers plan to cross the outlet (where the regular trail ends) and follow the

shores, waterproof boots or extra pairs of socks are recommended equipment. The clearness of the lakes and the symmetry of Sident and Quadra Mountains make this valley uniquely beautiful.

Completely different, but just as lovely, is Larch Valley above Moraine on the west side of the valley. The trail starts near the Moraine Lake Chalet and switchbacks easily up a steep slope for about 1,000 feet. Here a plateau rolls for 1,000 feet to Sentinel Pass. Two small lakes are encountered above timberline towards the pass. Turning about on one of the clearer ridges of the plateau one sees the full sweep of the mighty Ten Peaks framed in frothy larch branches.

From a junction just short of the plateau (2 miles from Moraine) there is a sign which reads "Wenkenema Pass". This indicates a trail line which leads to the head of the main valley. This takes the hiker 3 miles to Eiffel Lake and provides a succession of fine views of the Ten Peaks.

An interesting hike of about 13 miles may be made from Moraine Lake to Larch Valley over Sentinel Pass and down Paradise Valley by the high-line trail to Lake Annette, thence to the main trail and the highway. (Consult Paradise notes for this hike.)

LAKE O'HARA AREA

Lake O'Hara may be reached from Lake Louise or from Lake Wapta on the highway 8 miles west of the upper Lake Louise junction. It lies on the far side of Mount Victoria from Lake Louise, in a region of lofty peaks and many small and beautiful lakes. The vegetation on this west side of the continental divide is slightly different from that of the eastern slope. The hike is a pleasant one, as the trail is easily graded. It can be walked in and out from Wapta in one day, but this would leave little time for anything but a glimpse of a place where one would likely wish to spend at least a day or two. For those carrying some camping equipment, pack-horses may be hired if necessary. For those not planning to camp, there is a very comfortable lodge with bungalows. Reservations may be made by writing Lake O'Hara Lodge, Lake Louise, Alberta.

Mileages for the main trails which may be used by riders or hikers are as follows: Lake Louise to Wapta Lake, 8 miles; Lake Louise to Lake O'Hara, 15 miles; Wapta Lake to Lake O'Hara, 8 miles; Lake O'Hara to Opabin Plateau, 2½ miles; Lake O'Hara to Lake McArthur, 3½ miles; Lake O'Hara Trail to Linda Lake, 3 miles. Additional walking trails are available as well, and the key to this trail system is given on a large sign at the lodge. They are marked by small metal signs along the routes, as follows: BLUE CIRCLE Memorial Trail around Lake O'Hara, 2 miles. RED TRIANGLE TOUR—Lake O'Hara to Wixaway Gap, Lake Oesa, Victoria Lakes and return to Lake O'Hara, 8 miles (Wixaway Gap 2 miles, or Lake Oesa 2½ miles). BLUE TRIANGLE TOUR—Lake O'Hara to Lake Oesa, by the Yukon ledge to Opabin Plateau, Opabin Cliff Lakes and back

to Lake O'Hara, 7 to 8 miles. SILVER CIRCLE TOUR—Lake O'Hara to Linda Lake, 4 miles; to Cathedral Lakes, 1 mile; and Linda Lake to Lake O'Hara Trail, 3 miles (1½ miles from Lake O'Hara). YELLOW TRIANGLE TOUR—Lake O'Hara to Lake McArthur Pass, and Odaray Plateau to the Grand Prospect 2½ miles, circling back by All Souls Trail on Mount Schaeffer to total 8 miles return to Lake O'Hara.

It is possible to make these circle tours so that, for the energetic hiker, very little duplication of trail is necessary in the Lake O'Hara area. All trails are well marked and graded. The viewpoints at the Grand Prospect, and above the All Souls Trail have been marked by steps up, and a "V" sign.

The trails to Lake Oesa and Opabin Meadows descend on both sides of the Seven Veils Falls at the east end of Lake O'Hara, and into the high and rugged valleys flanking Mount Yukness.

Lake McArthur is the much the largest of the lakes in the region. Dominating its deep blue waters is the almost perfectly triangular peak of Mount Biddle. The trail leading to McArthur Pass and Linda Lake properly starts in the meadow about one-quarter of a mile from Lake O'Hara, where the public camping area and the Alpine Club huts are located. The Odaray Plateau trail can be included on the trip to Lake McArthur, going either way, and is noted for the beauty of the larch forest and for a higher level view of the entire O'Hara Valley.

One of the most delightful trails in the area is a rolling one to Linda Lake; it purposely rolls uphill and down to get the most in scenic interest out of the trip. Morning Glory Larch Lakes, first seen from a height, each reveal a different colour. Their colours range from the turquoise of the upper lake, under the walls of Mount Odaray, to the clear dark green of the lower lake. The trail crosses the stream below the upper lake and climbs a timber ridge to Linda Lake on the north side of Odaray.

The Cathedral Lakes are in the camp-ground above Linda Lake and are shown on the map but provide a most attractive addition to this tour.

HISTORICAL NOTES

There is very little historical background for this region of high mountain valleys since obviously they did not offer possible routes across the "Great Mountain Barrier" and were ignored by the early explorers. It remained for the "tourists", the mountain lovers, to discover their hidden beauties.

Lake Louise was known to the Indians but the first white man to see it, of whom we have knowledge, was Tom Wilson. In 1810 he was camped on the Pipestone River near an Indian encampment. When they heard a great avalanche the Indians pointed toward the "Big Snow Mountain above the Lake of Little Fishes". The next day Tom persuaded one of the Indians, Edwin, to guide him to the lake, and to the "Goat's Looking Glass", probably Lake Agnes.

The first inn at Lake Louise was erected before 1870; it was reached by wagon road. It burned in 1893 and

was replaced by a large hotel. In 1923 this chalet burned and was replaced with the present fireproof structure.

One of the earliest tourists to explore this area extensively and to make some "first ascents" of nearby peaks was Walter Wilcox of Washington, D.C. He camped at Lake Louise soon after it was discovered, and in 1894 entered Paradise Valley with two friends. Going over the Lefroy Glacier and a snow pass by the Mitre, he glissaded to the green meadows below, descended the valley by the Giant Steps, and returned to Lake Louise over Fairview. In 1899, with guide Ross Peacock and four horses, but without benefit of trails, Wilcox made a complete circuit of this block of mountains from Lake Louise past the mouth of Paradise Valley, discovering Moraine Lake which he had seen from Mount Temple. Keeping near the timberline he visited most of the high valleys en route to Vermilion Summit, entered the Kootenay National Park area where he ascended Prospector's Valley behind the Ten Peaks, and finally crossed the mountains by Ottetill and McArthur Passes to Lake O'Hara and thence to the railway near Wapta. Probably the first tourist to visit Lake O'Hara was Lt.-Col. O'Hara, but most of the other valleys of the area were discovered by Wilcox on this trip.

SOME PLACE NAME ORIGINS

Victoria—after Queen Victoria; Louise—Princess, daughter of Victoria; Lefroy—Sir John H. Lefroy, head of the Toronto Observatory, 1842-1853; St. Piran—Cornwall birthplace of first manager of chalet O'Hara; Lt.-Col. O'Hara, R.A.; Oesa—Stoney Indian for ice; McArthur—Dominion land surveyor for region; Hungabee—Stoney for chieftain; Odaray—very bushy; Schaeffer—botanist; Wixaway—windy.

SOME OF THE FLOWERS IN THIS REGION

WHITE BLOOM—Indian Paintbrush (some creamy), Chalice Cup (early), Globe Flower (early), Mount Rhododendron (a shrub), Valerian (wild heliotrope)—Spring Beauty (in Sheol Valley), Mount Heather and Heath, Saxifrage (common and alpine), Nancy-over-the-Ground, Mount Avena (Dryas), Cow Parsnip (large root, clustered bloom), Bunch Berry, Wintergreen, Woolly Labrador Tea (shrub), Contorted Lousewort.

PINK AND RED BLOOM—Indian Paintbrush (all shades from pink to maroon), Swamp Laurel, Moss Campion, False Azalia (shrub), Bog Wintergreen, Mount Saxifrage, (almost purple), Mount Heather, Twin Flower (carpets of small pink bells with an almond scent), Galypso (a slipper orchid), Arctic Raspberry, Willow Herb (Mountain varieties of fireweed).

YELLOW BLOOM—Arnica (heart-leaved and alpine), Snow Lily (dog-toothed violet), Columbine, Violet, Saxifrage (yellow), Cinquefoil (shrub or plant), Stenopoc, Drummond's Dryas.

BLUE TO PURPLE BLOOM—Violet, Mount Forget-me-not, Clematis, Fleabane (giant purple and alpine), Purple Beardstongue (Lake Agnes), Alpine Speedwell.

PLEASE DO NOT PICK THE WILD FLOWERS—LEAVE THEM FOR OTHERS TO ENJOY

SOME BIRDS AND ANIMALS OF THE REGION

Hermil Thrush, American Robin, Audubon Warbler, Ptarmigan, Richardson Grouse, Pine Grosbeak, Chickadee, Eagle, Moose, Goat, Black Bear, Marmot, Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel, Gopher, Pike (rock rabbit) Elk, Deer, Red Squirrel, Chipmunk.

GEOLOGICAL NOTES

This mountain group shows the oldest rock in the Mountain National Parks—Pre-Cambrian and Cambrian limestone, sandstone and limestone shales. Here are cliff and valley glaciers, and here are the steep slopes with moraine debris and bordered by an infinitude of glacial sculptured landforms in all stages of development. Cirques with high vertical walls and beautiful rock basin lakes, numerous U-shaped valleys bordered by glacial smoothed walls, truncated mountain spurs, hanging valleys, and waterfalls. Many of these valleys contain lakes such as Moraine Lake, that have been formed partly by the deposition of rock debris by the glacier at the termination of the ice tongue, or where it halted in its retreat.

CLOTHING HINTS FOR MOUNTAIN HIKING

BOOTS with good thick soles, preferably hobnailed, for extensive hiking. For shorter walks a flat walking shoe, preferably with rubber soles.

WOOL SOCKS—more than one pair if you are wearing heavy boots. A change of socks in your knapsack is often a great boon; also an extra sweater.

WATERPROOF JACKET (unlined)—Mountain storms can come up very suddenly, and temperatures vary with altitude.

Fires may not be lit anywhere in the park except in places prepared for them, such as picnic-ground and fire-circles. Travel permits are required for overnight travel on park trails and for mountain climbing. Organized groups of picnickers are requested to obtain Fire Permits for use of picnic-ground or fire-circles. Fire and Travel Permits are obtained from the office of the Chief Warden or from the District Warden.

Please note that it is against Park Regulations to feed the bears.

Compiled in co-operation with the National Parks of Canada. For additional copies, or other information on the National Parks, write to:

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